

#### RELATED TERMS

- Hurricane Preparedness
- Incident Management



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#### PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

- Emergency Management
- Community Preparedness
- Search and Rescue

## PRACTICE NOTE

### Exercise Participation: The Alabama Emergency Management Agency's Inclusion of State Mutual Aid Teams

#### PRACTICE

The Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) invites the command and general staff of the State's official mutual aid teams to participate in AEMA-sponsored exercises. This allows these mutual aid teams to gain familiarity with the personnel and practices of other jurisdictions across the state.

#### DESCRIPTION

The Alabama Mutual Aid System (AMAS) consists of 44 standardized teams across the state. AMAS includes light, medium, and heavy rescue teams; confined space, high angle, and swift water rescue teams; HazMat teams; and an incident management team that assists localities. During an emergency, the AEMA can deploy these AMAS teams to support emergency response operations. When Hurricane Katrina made its second landfall along the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, AEMA activated AMAS and deployed mutual aid teams to the state's most heavily impacted regions.

During the months following Hurricane Katrina, AEMA held a series of state and local exercises to test hurricane preparedness. The agency recognized that mutual aid teams would be valuable participants in these exercises given their significant contributions to the Hurricane Katrina response effort. AEMA invited the command and general staff of three mutual aid teams from the three northernmost regions of the state to a June, 2006 hurricane exercise in the southern city of Mobile. AEMA has now invited the command and general staff of all remaining state mutual aid teams to an exercise in the city of Dothan scheduled for September, 2006.

AEMA's practice of inviting staff from state mutual aid teams to participate in exercises throughout the state allows the teams' leaders to gain familiarity with a particular region's unique challenges and response procedures, and to build relationships with other first responders. This practice can ultimately enhance the teams' effectiveness during times of crisis.

#### CITATIONS

Guerrera, Sam. Alabama Emergency Management Agency. Interview with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*. 24 Aug 2006.

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